

Kids Eat Safely through Summer Program

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The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to children between the ages of 1-18, while the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), Bureau of Consumer Health (BCH), Food Protection & Consumer Safety program ensures that the children are protected through the safe handling and preparation of foods.



The Bureau, through a partnership agreement with the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), performs food safety and environmental sanitation inspections. In 2004, the partnership assured the safety of more than a half million breakfasts, lunches, suppers and snacks provided to Kansas kids. This year the program is approaching a half million meals and snacks served already.

SFSP was created in 1968 as part of a pilot project, becoming a separate child nutrition program in 1975. The nationwide program has grown to serve more than 2.3 million children through an estimated 29,000 sites.

“It was a really good experience for the whole community,” says Jeanette Myers, the Food Service Director for USD 435 Abilene, in describing the SFSP. Myers says the program fulfilled a very important need in the community and generated a lot of excitement and participation by the parents. The Abilene site served an average of 130 meals each day of their program.

The Arkansas City Recreation Commission is a first-year participant in SFSP, according to Sherry Coldwell, director. She says, “the SFSP is a good program. It helped fund the program for the kids and made it easier for the parents.”

The commission offered three two-week sessions and the kids could attend a single session or all three. The sessions were entitled “Back to the Basics Fun,” during which the kids learned how to make homemade ice cream and squeezed lemons for making lemonade, “Games Galore”, and “What a Wonderful World.” The kids played games, learned skills and explored the world during the mornings and then went to the swimming pool across the street in the afternoons. Coldwell noted, “you can tell which kids participated in the program by their suntans.”



Both hot and cold meals were served. Menu items included turkey and cheese sandwiches, ham and cheese sandwiches, hot ham wraps, blueberry muffins, peanut butter cookies, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and milk.

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Inspections by KDHE, Bureau of Consumer Health (BCH), Food Protection & Consumer Safety Food Inspectors made sure the SFPS provided safely prepared meals and snacks to participating kids to prevent foodborne illness.

Just a few statistics bring home the importance of food safety:

Foodborne illness (FBI) Statistics:

- 76 Million Cases of FBI a Year in the U.S.
- 325,000 Hospitalizations a Year in the U.S. Caused by FBI
- 5,200 Deaths a Year in the U.S. Caused by FBI
- \$7.7 -\$23 Billion Annual Cost
- \$77,000 Average Cost Per Incident

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service alongside such other programs as the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program regulates the program at the federal level. In Kansas, KSDE establishes cooperative agreements with sponsors who in turn establish SFSP sites. Sites typically are schools, community centers, churches and/or city parks programs.

A strong partnership between the Bureau of Consumer Health (BCH), Food Protection and Consumer Safety Program, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, is protecting the food programs for Kansas children, families and communities.